



Initial Report on In-work Poverty in the Social Service Sector

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Year: 2015

Commissioned by: EASPD

Based on desk research into Europe in general and 13 countries in particular:

AT, BE, BG, CY, FI, GE, DE, EL, HU, IE, RO, ES, UK

Why social services are important

Social services are essential to all member states to ensure social protection and reduce inequalities for their citizens. They also contribute significantly to the economy, preventing more costly hospital acute care and readmissions as well as releasing family carers into the labour market.

‘Social Services represent smart and sustainable investment in that they do not only assist people but also have a preventative, activating and enabling function if designed well’.¹

Social services and employment

The social services sector represents a substantial source of employment as a result of the aging population in Europe, and has continued to grow even in times of economic crisis and austerity. There is now a need to expand this workforce to meet the demographic challenges facing Europe’s policy makers as they seek to protect and support their most vulnerable citizens. There is also an opportunity to create a significant number of new jobs, especially for young people, and to improve the working conditions of social care/support workers in order to attract good quality workers and support better service provision.

Workforce in social services

The pay and conditions of service of social care/support workers and social workers is poor.

What is the workforce profile in social work/care?

Social workers in the 13 countries considered have many similarities, and the majority are women. In general they have a high level of education and the job has some status. The age profile varies across countries.

Social care/support workforce is overall overwhelmingly female with low educational achievement. However, managers tend more often to be male. The age profile varies, as does that of nationality (home or migrant) and is changing in times of high unemployment.

Is it possible to live on the average social work/care wage as a single person with no children, second wage or other benefits?

Social work: Possible in all selected states except 4 countries: EL, BG, RO and ES.

Social care: Impossible in all selected states except 4 countries: BE, AT, IE and FI.

¹ Social Investment Package (SIP) 2013. ‘Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion’ – including implementing the social investment fund 2014-2020 (COM (2013) 83 final).



Models of service delivery

Models of service provision vary across the countries considered, including both public and independent sector delivery, but most rely heavily on the provision of 'free' care by families. In effect, this means care by women, which has a significant influence not only on the profile of the social services workforce itself but also, more importantly, on its status: 'women's work' tends to be perceived as low status. The effects of different models of service provision on the position and role of social care/support workers are not well documented or understood.

Policy recommendations

That the **EU institution(s)** consider:

1. Funding their own in- depth investigation into issues facing social care/support workers across Europe.
2. Making the many issues facing social care/support workers a priority in the European Semester.
3. Ensuring that sufficient investment into social services to guarantee adequate staff is not undermined by policies used to implement the Stability and Growth Pact
4. Using the European Pillar of Social Rights to begin to effect change in relation to the position of social care/support workers (currently under consultation).
5. Establishing a European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Social Services Sector.
6. Establishing an idea/learning exchange.
7. Using structural funds to support current EU policy directives, ensuring these are not unintentionally undermined by a) funding training that does not support a social model of disability and a human rights approach to care/support, or b) funding services that perpetuate institutionalisation.
8. Focusing on a reduction in the gender pay gap in the social services sector.
9. Promoting a better image of the sector.
10. Promoting minimum levels of training across the EU.

That **National policy makers** consider:

1. Contributing to the development and establishment of the European Pillar of Social Rights.
2. Strengthening national Social Dialogue structures for the social services and helping to identify national representatives that are truly representative of the sector..
3. Contributing to a European ideas/learning exchange.
4. Promoting a positive image of social care/support and social work and raise profile in nation.
5. Establishing foundation training (as a minimum) for social care/support workers that is based upon UNCRPD principles and promotes a rights based approach to social care/support.
6. Ensuring that sufficient financial support is provided to the social services sector to provide high quality services and decent jobs to social care/support workers.

To read to full report visit the website of EASPD (www.easpd.eu) or contact asel.kadyrbaeva@easpd.eu



This position paper has been produced with the financial support of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.